

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TUNIS 05716 152233Z
ACTION NEA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2142

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5716

STADIS//////////

NEA/AFN FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, TS
SUBJ: ANNUAL INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT OF SECURITY ASSISTANCE
TO TUNISIA

REF: A) TUNIS 5209, B) STATE 167901

1. I HAVE JUST RECEIVED TONY LEGGIO'S LETTER OF
AUGUST 4 IN WHICH WAS ENCLOSED A COPY OF THE DECISION
UNIT OVERVIEW PAPER FOR THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
IN TUNISIA. IN GENERAL I THOUGHT THIS WAS A WELL PREPARED
PRESENTATION OF OUR GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PROGRAMS IN
TUNISIA, BUT THERE WERE SEVERAL STATEMENTS ON PAGE TWO
WHICH PUZZLED ME.

2. ONE WAS THE REFERENCE (TWO) TO SAUDI MILITARY
ASSISTANCE. I AM NOT AWARE THAT ANY SUCH ASSISTANCE
PROGRAMS EXIST, ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS (WHICH
WE HAVE REPORTED) OF SOME INDIRECT HELP GOING AS HIGH AS
\$100 MILLION. TALK OF THIS AROSE LAST YEAR WHEN IT WAS
RUMORED A LARGE SAUDI LOAN WAS TO BE MADE FOR
THE BOURGUIBA (SIDI SAAD) EAM PROJECT. THIS PROJECT
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HAD BEEN STARTED TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO UNDER A
CANADIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, WHICH REQUIRED
TUNISIAN FUNDING OF LOCAL COSTS. THE RUMOR WAS THAT THE SAUDIS
WOULD MAKE NEW AID AVAILABLE TO THE GOT FOR THE DAM PROJECT
IN ORDER TO FREE ALREADY OBLIGATED TUNISIAN FUNDS FOR
MILITARY EXPENDITURES. A 74 MILLION DOLLAR (EQUIVALENT)
LAON AGREEMENT WAS IN FACT SIGNED ON JULY 29, ALTHOUGH

WE CANNOT STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THIS ACTUALLY FREED A SIMILAR AMOUNT FOR MILITARY EXPENDITURES. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE, IN VIEW OF KNOWN COST OVERRUNS, THAT THE SAUDIS' HELP WILL SERVE TO COVER COST INCREASES WHICH HAD NOT BEEN FORESEEN EITHER BY THE TUNISIANS OR CANADIANS WHEN THE PROJECT WAS FORMULATED. ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT, THIS IS NOT A SAUDI CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEFENSE MOBILIZATION PLAN.

3. A SECOND POINT THAT I NOTICED WAS THE STATEMENT, ALSO ON PAGE TWO, THAT THE TUNISIANS HAVE STONEWALLED OFFERS OF MAJOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM THE SOVIETS. I AM AWARE OF SOME OLD STORIES TO THIS EFFECT, ALTHOUGH IN ALL HONESTY I COULD NOT SWEAR THAT THIS IS TRUE NOW, IF IT EVER WAS. THERE WAS A RUMOR THAT THE SOVIETS MADE AN ARMS OFFER DURING NOUIRA'S TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION LAST YEAR, BUT I DO NOT RECALL EVER HAVING SEEN ANYTHING TO SUPPORT THIS.

4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE DEPARTMENT HAS INFORMATION ON THESE TWO POINTS WHICH I HAVE NOT SEEN OR SOMEHOW DO NOT RECALL. IF THIS IS THE CASE, WELL AND GOOD. OTHERWISE, IT MIGHT BE WISER TO MAKE APPROPRIATE AMENDMENTS TO PAGE TWO IN ORDER TO AVOID POSSIBLE EMBARRASSMENT. I WOULD NOT LIKE IT TO SEEM THAT WE ARE OVERSELLING OUR POSITION, ESPECIALLY AS I THINK THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR TUNISIA STANDS WELL ON ITS OWN MERITS.

5. ONE ADDITIONAL COMMENT. USLOT HAS LOOKED OVER YOUR ASSESSMENT, AND IN VIEW OF DISCUSSIONS CURRENTLY UNDER WAY WITH THE GOT, HAS SUGGESTED INCLUSION OF "ANTI-TANK WEAPONS" IN LIST OF ITEMS FOR WHICH FMS FINANCING MIGHT BE USED. I CONCUR.
MULCAHY

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